

Senator HEFLIN. Dr. Becton.

STATEMENT OF JULIUS BECTON, JR.

Mr. BECTON. I am delighted to return briefly to this chamber. My name is Julius Becton, and I am president of Prairie View A&M University, part of the Texas A&M University System. And I might add that I have a plane to catch in about 35 minutes.

I am here to support the President's nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court.

Prior to arriving at Prairie View in 1989, I directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and before that, director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the Agency for International Development. Prior to that, I served in the Army almost 40 years.

It was during my tenure at FEMA that I first met Judge Clarence Thomas, when he was the head of the EEOC. We were among the very few black political appointees holding key Government positions at that time.

The value, I hope, of my testimony today lies in my personal belief in Judge Thomas as a man and as a compassionate civil servant. I recommend him as a Supreme Court Justice for several reasons.

I know him to be a good man, a man who sincerely wishes to employ his authority as a civil servant for the betterment of society. This includes his desire to promote the advancement of minorities without infringing on the rights of the majority.

This point is particularly critical in order to avoid reverse discrimination, with the resulting backlash that goes with it. Too prolonged, too concentrated an effort to make up for past injustices can create new injustices.

As a footnote, in my judgment, such making up for the past can also stifle individual initiative because we look to someone else, usually government, to solve problems that are within our own power to solve.

Equal treatment, not preferential treatment, is what Judge Thomas is all about.

I would like to mention a few initiatives and actions of Judge Thomas that recommend him as an effective judge and administrator.

As head of the EEOC, Judge Thomas enforced the laws against employment discrimination. The office went to court 60 percent more often than was done in previous years.

His record on the Federal appeals court shows judicial restraint rather than activism.

There are two specific efforts in which Judge Thomas participated that illustrate a concern for the advancement of minorities—the Minority Leaders Fellowship Program and the General Motors agreement.

In 1989, Judge Thomas encouraged the Washington Center to establish a Minority Leaders Fellowship Program whose concept is to identify outstanding minority students who could benefit from an internship in Washington, DC.

As chairman of the EEOC in 1983, Clarence Thomas signed a \$42.5 million 5-year agreement with General Motors Corp., which was the largest nonlitigated settlement in EEOC history.

Thirty-nine HBCU's, or historically black colleges and universities, received endowments as a result of his actions to enhance the educational opportunities for students in the engineering and technological fields. Prairie View A&M University was one of those institutions aided through Judge Thomas' efforts. We received \$250,000.

It is clear, at least to me, from these and other examples, that Clarence Thomas has been concerned for quite some time about correcting minority injustices by taking positive actions to resolve them. I believe we all can agree that men and women of good will can agree on the goal of helping minorities yet differ on the means of achieving that goal. Their differences may be the result of opposing political philosophies, or based on a preference for alternative strategies.

I can empathize with the committee and your responsibility in this hearing. You must offer your best advice and consent—*not your rubber stamp*—in the matter of Clarence Thomas' nomination to the Supreme Court. Therefore, I would urge that partisan politics be put aside in deciding on this lifetime appointment, just as a justice must put aside mere personal predilections.

Which leaves us with the evidence of the man himself: Clarence Thomas' background, his service to his country, his recorded opinions and actions. We all want good men and women on the Supreme Court in the sense that they have the intellectual competence to make crucial judgments on behalf of the Nation, and in the sense that they have the moral values and conscience to guide them through those difficult issues. It is appropriate that we demand a high calibre individual for this position, for the justices must distill a lifetime of education and experience and thought into their judgments, yet they must look beyond themselves as individuals to the Nation's higher agenda.

In this sense, Clarence Thomas would unquestionably serve this country well on the Supreme Court.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Becton follows:]